

VZCZCXRO5068
RR RUEHCD RUEHGD RUEHHO RUEHMC RUEHNG RUEHNL RUEHRD RUEHRS RUEHTM
DE RUEHME #1234/01 1231856
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 031856Z MAY 09
FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6361
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHMFIUU/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
INFO RUEHXC/ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO COLLECTIVE
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA 2562

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 MEXICO 001234

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

STATE FOR WHA/MEX, WHA/PDA,
STATE FOR OES/IHB, PA, CAPRESS
STATE FOR MED/DASHO (MCFADDEN, RINALDO, KEYES)
STATE FOR MED/DIR (PENNER)
STATE FOR DS/IP/WHA
CDC FOR CCID/NCPDCID, CCID/NCIRD and COGH/DGPPC

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CVIS](#) [CASC](#) [KSCA](#) [TBIO](#) [MX](#)
SUBJECT: SITREP 9 - H1N1 Outbreak in Mexico

1. (U) SUMMARY

Secretary of Health Cordova announced that the GOM had confirmed 443 cases of H1N1 and 16 fatalities as of the morning of 2 May. President Calderon and Mayor Ebrard registered encouragement at what they viewed as a positive turn in statistics. The U.S. and Mexican Presidents reviewed the situation by phone. Mexico's Foreign Secretary denounced discrimination against Mexicans abroad.

2. (U) FEDERAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACTIONS

On the afternoon of 2 May, Presidents Calderon and Obama spoke to discuss Mexican and U.S. action against the flu outbreak. According to a press release by the Mexican Presidency, Calderon thanked his U.S. counterpart for maintaining open movement of people and commerce and for the U.S. donation of antiviral drug Tamiflu.

Earlier in the day, Foreign Secretary Espinosa denounced treatment of Mexican nationals abroad by certain countries and advised Mexicans against travel to China. By the Foreign Ministry's count, China has quarantined 71 Mexican nationals. This number includes many who arrived in Shanghai aboard the same airliner as an H1N1-infected passenger. Espinosa expressed dismay that "brother" countries Argentina, Peru, and Ecuador had suspended flights to Mexico.

Mexico City Mayor Ebrard held a morning press conference 2 May in which he said he believed the capital had moved from "stage red" to "stage yellow." According to his analysis, the situation is stabilizing and the city is better positioned than last week. He announced a new program of heightened cleaning of mass transit facilities, schools, and public markets.

3. (U) ACTIONS BY NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Nothing new to report.

4. (SBU) STATISTICS

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT: Secretary of Health Cordova announced in a 1 May morning press conference that the number of confirmed cases now stands at 443 (out of 1,105 cases tested), with fatalities steady at

¶16. Of the 16 dead, the distribution by state is: 11 Federal District, 3 State of Mexico, 1 Oaxaca, 1 Tlaxcala. 9 of the 16 were aged between 21 and 40. 12 were female, 4 male. Some degree of doubt remains as regards 2 of the 16 fatalities, which cases will be retested.

STATE GOVERNMENT: The state-by-state breakdown of cases compiled by the Secretariat of Health was not available today subsequent to release of the Secretariat of Health's latest countrywide numbers. In a meeting the afternoon of 2 May with the governors of the states of Morelos, Michoacan and Durango, President Calderon said federal and state governments would standardize available information for better coordination of data. The President also noted that the day's statistics given by the Secretary of Health were encouraging.

¶15. (U) MANAGEMENT ISSUES

The CDC has allocated USD 20,000 to finance logistical support for its ongoing field operations in Mexico. The Embassy medical unit received no calls in the last 24 hours and tested no additional staff for H1N1. Confirmation is still pending on the one Embassy case deemed "probable."

¶16. (U) SECURITY ISSUES

Nothing new to report.

¶17. (U) CONSULAR ISSUES

MEXICO 00001234 002 OF 004

Call volume to the Embassy switchboard continues to decline. In the 24 hours through 0900 2 May, 58 calls were received, divided evenly among passport, visa, and influenza queries. Between 1000 and 1500 on 2 May, the switchboard received 11 calls, 3 of which concerned H1N1.

MERIDA: Test results received 2 May indicate the AmCit whose case we detailed in Sitrep 8 is negative for H1N1. The AmCit will return stateside on 3 May.

¶18. (U) CONSULATE ISSUES

GUADALAJARA: Health checkpoints set up by state officials on major highways and state roads led to a few individuals being stopped and checked, but no positive results for H1N1. Similar checks are occurring at the Guadalajara airport -- approximately 30 yesterday, all of which turned out negative.

The Jalisco state secretary of labor, Ernesto Espinosa, stated he would not seek to sanction companies that are staying open, in spite of the decree for non-essential businesses to close through May 5. Most restaurants and small businesses in Guadalajara have remained open through the weekend, though business is noticeably down. Larger business, however, have shuttered, with some 6,000 factories closing through the holiday.

HERMOSILLO: No cases of H1N1 influenza confirmed to date in Hermosillo's consular district. Arizona ports of entry report moderate traffic, down slightly from yesterday. Border wait times in Nogales range from 50 minutes (Deconcini POE) to 45 minutes (Mariposa). DHS in Arizona reports no cases of visibly sick travelers entering the U.S. from Mexico. The consulate duty phone received no calls regarding H1N1 influenza during the last 24 hours.

MERIDA: Quintana Roo reports overall hotel occupancy at 50%. Cancun has experienced a 44% decline in occupancy over recent days. The airport reports 7 cancelled flights today (incoming). Arriving flights have very low load factors. Outgoing flights remain full.

MONTERREY: Although the state governments are all following federal

regulations, several states are increasingly emphasizing that their states are "free" of H1N1 flu. Coahuila, Zacatecas and Durango stress they have no confirmed cases, although there are a number of suspected cases being tested. Nuevo Leon also has no confirmed cases, while San Luis Potosi recognizes that H1N1 is more serious. Several states emphasize they have sufficient anti-viral medication on hand. Most Labor Day celebrations were cancelled 1 May, less the large CTM labor union march in Nuevo Leon. States are taking steps to reduce the risk of H1N1. Nuevo Leon closed bars (and enforced the order). Monterrey airport installed a thermographic device to measure passengers' body temperature. IMSS (social security) hospitals in Zacatecas are providing medical care to all people with H1N1 symptoms, not just their patients.

People in Nuevo Leon stayed home, although a few ventured out to open air parks. A representative of business association CANACO estimated 80% of businesses were open, although sales were off substantially. Hotel occupancy was off 50% and many conferences were cancelled. Basic services continued normally. In San Luis Potosi, bus ridership fell by 60%. H1N1 continues to headline news reports. Reporting discusses the latest statistics, cancellation of May 1 celebrations, the impact of fear of the flu, and the drop in tourism. Several stories addressed the treatment of Mexicans traveling to other countries. Finally, there were stories about how many Mexicans decided to spend the weekend in the U.S. and traffic jams at the border.

There are no suspected cases of H1N1 among Consulate direct hire, LES staff or dependents. The duty officer has not received any calls related to H1N1.

NOGALES: No change in public reaction from yesterday's report. CBP reports normal northbound traffic at both Nogales ports of entry. Sonora still has zero confirmed cases. There are a number of

MEXICO 00001234 003 OF 004

suspect cases on both sides of the border, all with tests sent for sampling and awaiting results. Visa services are suspended until May 8th. If services re-open early, H2 applicants will be contacted as soon as possible. ACS continues with limited service for emergencies and passport and CRBA applications.

NUEVO LAREDO: The public is calm and many people continue to wear face masks. Restaurants and grocery stores remain open to the public. According to local newspaper El Manana there are 9 suspected cases of H1N1 in Nuevo Laredo but still no confirmed cases. The local newspaper also reported that on 30 April, one Bertha Garcia Garza was refused entry into the Laredo point of entry (Bridge 1) for showing symptoms of influenza. Yesterday, the Laredo Independent School District announced that it will be closed until May 18. Several EFMs at post attend school in Laredo, TX.

TIJUANA: Although unconfirmed by official sources, press reports an announcement from the Baja state health secretary of four positive cases of H1N1 in Baja, all in Mexicali. The four cases were seen between the end of March and mid-April. The patients and their families were treated and all have fully recovered. Hospital General in Tijuana reports one patient in isolation who is "suspect." Three other cases for whom samples were sent tested negative. The hospital has set up outside mobile units for checking people who arrive with H1N1 symptoms.

Ports of entry report less-than-expected crossings for the holiday weekend, with waits of less than an hour. CBP has begun handing out information cards that list flu symptoms and provide website links for more information. San Diego announced the closure of three high schools and suspension of extracurricular activities for the next two weeks due to confirmed cases. (No Consulate children attend any of the closed schools.) The San Diego area now has at least ten confirmed cases, including multiple military personnel.

Business group COPARMEX estimated 550 businesses, with 45,000 to 50,000 employees, will remain closed for the weekend following the 1 May holiday. The local Chamber of Commerce (CANACO) announced that the bars and cantinas of Tijuana remain open for business. Rosarito and Ensenada businesses are also open in hopes the long weekend

will generate business, but the beaches are deserted. The Tijuana airport director reported passenger load is down 25%.

19. (U) MEDIA REACTION/GENERAL POPULATION SENTIMENTS

On 2 May, Mexican media coverage focused on the devastating effect H1N1 is having on tourism -- the country's number four source of foreign revenue. Newspaper Reforma's feature story is "Virus kills tourism." Secretary of Tourism Elizondo said that Cancun and other destinations were experiencing a 70% cancellation rate and that foreign tourism around the country could be down 85% by next week. The Reforma report highlighted that Continental airlines would cut by half its flights to Mexico during the month of May. Secretary Elizondo said that all ad campaigns to promote tourism to Mexico around the world would be put on hiatus. Other outlets echoed with similarly bleak headlines: "Rejection of Mexicans grows around the World" (El Universal); "Tourism close to zero, 2.2 million jobs at risk" (El Sol de Mexico). Several media outlets treated the announcement by the Secretary of Health that there are now 443 confirmed cases of H1N1 and 16 deaths as a positive development. "Flu takes a dip," stated newspaper Milenio, while daily La Cronica titled its feature story "No new deaths in Mexico City." Secretary Cordova attributed the increase in the number of confirmed cases to faster sample processing by authorities. Other "good news" stories included the calculation of an infection rate, established to be 1.5, and donations from around the world, including USD 5 million from the U.S. (Note: provided to WHO and PAHO), USD 5 million from China, and Euro 1 million from Spain, as well as 400,000 courses of Tamiflu from the U.S. Newspaper Reforma also reported the decision of the Secretariats of Health and Public Education that before schools are re-opened they will be disinfected and new committees and protocols created to keep them clean. "Even when activities return to normal, many measures will stay in effect to avoid a new outbreak." According to Milenio's political gossip column Trascendio, businesses around the country are expected to reopen May 6, while schools could resume

MEXICO 00001234 004 OF 004

classes May 11. Columnist Salvador Garcia of El Universal noted that negotiations between federal electoral authorities, Congress and the federal government had brought agreement not to reschedule midterm elections.

110. (U) ECONOMIC IMPACT

Labor Day in Mexico City was significantly quieter than usual. Instead of Zocalo-overflowing demonstrations, only several radical teacher, communist, and commercial sex worker groups conducted marches. Protestors wore protective masks.

111. (U) TRANSPORTATION

On 1 May, the Air Transport Association, the U.S. airline industry group, formally requested the Directorate General for Civil Aviation (DGAC, Mexico's FAA) grant a temporary waiver of minimum slot usage requirements at Mexico City and Cancun airports. The written request follows verbal assurances already offered by the DGAC. If approved, it will allow U.S. carriers to reduce capacity in line with falling passenger demand without forfeiting valuable landing slots at Mexico's two busiest airports.

164 of 189 passengers and crew of an Aeromexico 777 that carried an H1N1 positive Mexican national to Shanghai on 30 April (AM flight 98, Mexico City-Shanghai) were reported to be in quarantine in China.

112. (U) U.S. ASSISTANCE

The initial shipment of the 100,000 personal protection kits dispatched by USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) arrived in Mexico City on 2 May. OFDA and GOM authorities are conducting an inventory as of this writing.

